Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

Lessons from the flood

Abstract:

Don't build in the floodplain. That's the first lesson I learned (relearned) from the flood of 2008. I witnessed the city of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, slip underneath a swollen Cedar River on June 13, causing the evacuation of 4000-5000 buildings and property damage estimated at $1 billion or more. I saw my own school, the University of Iowa, suffer losses to 20 buildings along the engorged Iowa River. Some were constructed recently, well within memory of the devastating flood of 1993. People have called the 1993 flood a 100 year (yr) event, but it is just one of several major floods Cedar Rapids has experienced in the past 100 yr, says Rich Mahaney, emergency management coordinator for the Linn County (Iowa) Emergency Management Agency. How soon we forget! But the 2008 flood was much worse. According to geographic information system (GIS) maps developed by Linn County, it was at least a 500 yr event. The GIS maps show that the area of the flood was beyond the actual 500 yr floodplain footprint, Mahaney says. That means we experienced a destructive, nearly 100 yr flood, followed within 15 yr by a 500 yr flood. It makes you start to wonder about statistics, doesn't it?

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Resource Description

Exposure : ⊠

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

 Extreme Weather Event

   Extreme Weather Event: Flooding

Geographic Feature: ⊠

resource focuses on specific type of geography

 Freshwater

Geographic Location: ⊠

resource focuses on specific location

 United States

Health Impact: ⊠

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Health Outcome Unspecified

Resource Type: ☒

format or standard characteristic of resource

Policy/Opinion

Timescale: ☒

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified